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IT is announced by President John Thomas, of Middlebury College, that $91,685.50 has been contributed toward the $100,000 needed to secure the D. K. Pearson building and endowment fund of $100,000.

BY the will of Dr. James G. Wheeler, Broughton, the James Millikin University, Decatur, will come into possession of his estate, estimated to be worth from $75,000 to $125,000.

THE Ohio State University has received a gift of $10,000 from Mr. Robert T. Scott, Cadiz, the income to be used for the aid of poor students.

THE medical department of the University of Pennsylvania, has concluded arrangements for holding the first annual "Home Coming, or Progressive Medicine Week," to be given for the benefit of the alumni of the school, and to occupy the Easter vacation period. Plans are being considered to have each head of a department arrange, with the cooperation of his assistants, a program which will note deviations from the old standards, as well as lay stress upon principles which by constant practise have become crystallized. The alumni of the medical school who have distinguished themselves in their profession will be invited to cooperate.

ABBOTT LAWRENCE LOWELL, since 1900 professor of the science of government in Harvard University and previously since his graduation from Harvard College and the Law School a lawyer practising in Boston, will succeed Mr. Eliot as president of Harvard University.

DR. CHARLES H. HASKINS, professor of history in Harvard University, has been appointed dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, to succeed the late Professor John Henry Wright.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

PECULIAR ELECTRICAL PHENOMENA

IN an article by Professor J. E. Church, Jr., in SCIENCE, November 6, 1908, page 651, entitled "Electric Disturbances and Perils on Mountain Tops," Professor Church describes the peculiar brush discharges that emanated from the weather vane, the anemometer cups and other objects in an electric storm on Mount Rose, on October 20, 1907, between 6:30 and 7:30 P.M. He states also: "Whenever our hands arose in the air, every finger sent forth a vigorous flame."

It may be interesting to note that we find descriptions of similar phenomena in the Elizabethan era, and even in the days of Julius Cæsar. In the "Itinerary of Fynes Moryson" (Macmillan, 1908), Vol. 3, pp. 74–76, there is given an account of an electric storm on the night of December 23, 1601, at Kinsale, near Cork, Ireland. This storm, which took place in midwinter, and in a locality that was practically on the sea level, was preceded by "great lightning and terrible thunder" on the night of December 20, and by "continual flashes of lightning" on the night of December 21.

The following is Moryson's account:

> All the night was cleare [*i. e.*, brilliant?] with lightning (as in the former nights were great lightning with thunder) to the astonishment of many in respect of the season of the yeare. And I have heard by many horsemen of good credit, and namely by Captaine Pikeman, Cornet to the Lord Deputies troope, a Gentleman of good estimation in the Army, that this night our horsemen [who were] set to watch, to their seeming did see Lampes burne at the points of their staves or speares in the middest of these ightning flashes.

Again in North's "Plutarch," "Life of Julius Cæsar" as quoted in Porter and Clarke's edition of Julius Cæsar, p. 119:

> Strabo the Philosopher writeth that divers men were seene going up and down in fire; and furthermore, that there was a slave of the soldiers that did cast a marvellous burning flame out of his hand; insomuch as they that saw it thought he had been burnt, but when the fire was out it was found he had no hurt.

Shakespeare has embodied this account of Plutarch's in his tragedy of Julius Cæsar, Act I., Scene 3, lines 15–25. See also Burritt's "Geography of the Heavens," revised edition, New York, 1859, p. 155, for a reference to a somewhat similar phenomenon as observed by Baccaria.

HENRY PEMBERTON, JR.